

Message Text

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12

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 /052 W

----- 051791

R 260920Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY KABUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5167

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 7695

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AF, PK, IN, BG

SUBJ: AFGHAN VIEWS ON THE SITUATION IN SOUTH ASIA

1. DURING A LENGTHY TOUR D'HORIZON ON NOVEMBER 25, DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER ABDULLAH DISCUSSED THE CURRENT AFGHAN VIEW OF THE SITUATION IN THE REGION.

2. ABDULLAH SAID THAT THE SITUATION IN BANGLADESH IS A DANGEROUS ONE BECAUSE NO CHARISMATIC LEADER HAS EMERGED TO REPLACE MUJIB. WHEN I SAID THAT I THOUGHT IT WAS A TIME FOR ALL GOVERNMENTS TO EXERCISE PATIENCE, HE ADDED THAT IT IS ALSO A TIME WHEN FOREIGN INTERFERENCE SHOULD BE AVOIDED.

3. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION, ABDULLAH TOLD ME THAT INDIAN EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER CHAVAN DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO KABUL HAD TOLD THE AFGHANS THAT HE WAS PLEASED WITH HIS DISCUSSIONS IN WASHINGTON AND FELT THAT A START HAD BEEN MADE ON A NEW INDO-U.S. RELATIONSHIP. ABDULLAH COMMENTED THAT INDIA IS GOING THROUGH A DIFFICULT PERIOD INTERNALLY AND THAT IT WOULD BE DANGEROUS FOR THIS REGION AND FOR THE WORLD SHOULD THE CENTRIFUGAL FORCES IN INDIA BEGIN TO COMMAND THE SITUATION THERE.

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4. REGRADING PAKISTAN, ABDULLAH MERELY SAID THAT THERE IS "NOTHING NEW" IN PAK-AFGHAN RELATIONS. HE TOUCHED BRIEFLY ON SOME OF THE INTERNAL POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES FACING BHUTTO AND COMMENTED THAT IN HIS, ABDULLAH'S, VIEW THE ANSWER FOR PAKISTAN WOULD BE A COALITION GOVERNMENT IN WHICH THE VARIOUS REGIONS AND ETHNIC GROUPS WOULD HAVE A VOICE. COMMENT: THIS WAS MY FIRST OPPORTUNITY SINCE THE PAKISTANI SUPREME COURT DECISION IN THE NAP CASE TO DISCUSS PAK-AFGHAN RELATIONS WITH ABDULLAH. HE MENTIONED NEITHER THAT DECISION NOR BHUTTO'S SPEECH AT THE TIME THE DECISION WAS ANNOUNCED. IN FACT, EXCEPT FOR AN ALLUSION TO BHUTTO'S DRINKING HABITS, ABDULLAH WAS AS UNTALKATIVE AND MILD ON THIS SUBJECT AS I HAVE EVER SEEN HIM, PERHAPS INDICATING THAT THE AFGHANS ARE STILL CONSIDERING WHAT TO DO NEXT OR THAT THEY HAVE CONCLUDED THAT A TEMPERATE POLICY IS THE BEST POLICY FOR THE TIME BEING.

ELIOT

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTERVENTION, FOREIGN RELATIONS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 NOV 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975KABUL07695
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750413-0694
From: KABUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975118/aaaaagjz.tel
Line Count: 78
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <29 JUL 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <25 NOV 2003 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AFGHAN VIEWS ON THE SITUATION IN SOUTH ASIA
TAGS: PFOR, AF, PK, IN, BG
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006